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THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN PARK RESERVE AS A NATIONAL PLAYGROUND

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As phenomenal as has been the increase in population and the industrial and commercial development of the eastern half of the United States in the last quarter-century, we have every reason to believe that the next quarter will witness changes even more significant than those of the recent past. It is worthy of note that the development of a diversity of wants has progressed at a more rapid rate than the population increase. This has naturally revolutionized industries as to establishment, relative importance, equipment, labor control, marketing and distribution. The increase of aggregate and per capita wealth has kept pace with our marvelous industrial and commercial growth.

Springing from this maze of material prosperity, arise conditions so perplexing in character and impoverishing in tendency as to demand the serious consideration of every individual who is unwilling that the highest privileges of many be sacrificed to the financial emolument of the few. We are well aware of the influences rife for suppressing any movement which, for the well-being of posterity, thwarts the march of predatory gain. It is, therefore, becoming that we emphasize in a way which cannot be misunderstood the importance of conserving some of nature's stores on a sufficiently large scale, not only to fulfill adequately the urgent demands of this generation, but to meet the more pressing demands of our children and those who shall come after them.

The problem of forest conservation is usually discussed with reference to the primary object of supplying economically the lumber demands of the present and the future, but the prospective forest reserve in the southern Appalachians is far broader in its scope and purposes. For several years the government has had under consideration the feasibility of acquiring in the southern half of the Appalachian Mountains a large forest area geographically

situated in southern West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina.

Though the chief aim of this discussion is to point out the importance of this forest reserve from the standpoint of what it will mean to the people of the United States as a national recreative resort, it may be of interest and profit to outline, first, some of the economic benefits to accrue from the project, since these represent the fundamental purpose of the movement in its inception.

The region in question occupies the heart of the largest wooded region which remains east of the Rocky Mountains. Considering the states involved individually, we find that 73 per cent. of West Virginia is wooded, 58 per cent. of Virginia, 62 per cent. of Kentucky, 53 per cent. of Tennessee and 73 per cent. of North Carolina. Only a small proportion of the improved lands of the respective states is situated in the mountainous parts under discussion. From the standpoint of agricultural possibilities the region has little to offer, and the uplands which have been cleared and placed under cultivation are for the most part so unproductive as to give a scant living to the mountain people who have struggled to maintain themselves in these rugged regions since the early part of the last century. The great resource of this region has been lumber, and this is its most important resource at this time, except in the West Virginia-Virginia-Kentucky coal field. Though it is typically a hardwood region, and the part of the Appalachian belt where the hardwoods are developed in greatest variety and excellence, many soft woods also grow luxuriantly in favorable localities. Not only is this the most virgin part of the largest hardwood belt in the United States, but it is the only hardwood region whose economic environment is such as to foster a perpetuation of forest conditions. The wasteful cutting and destruction of the forests throughout this area has naturally resulted in degrading rather than improving the character of the resource. The slaughter continues, and fires of accidental or incendiary origin annually devastate hundreds of square miles of land on which would grow the most valuable cabinet hardwoods to great perfection. The protection which the government has given to her other forest domains is ample evidence that the destruction of the woods in the above region would be largely eliminated under governmental supervision and forest police protection. The present supply of the more valuable hardwoods is not equal

to the demand, and yet the present rate of cutting is about three times the average rate of growth.

However many substitutes for wood may be discovered and invented, there must always be an urgent and even growing demand for certain varieties, unless the developments of the future contradict all past experience. The future supply of lumber for the United States east of the Mississippi River is a problem which cannot possibly be solved except by generous donations and concessions to the future need. In proof of this, pass in mental review the facts that four-fifths of the magnificent forests of the Great Lake States have already been cut; that New England has been practically exhausted of her hardwoods; that, exclusive of Maine, the New England States are importers of hard and soft woods; and, that the great yellow pine forests of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts are being cut at a rate which means extinction in about thirty years. The Michigan forests are destined to go, since the land is agriculturally productive and adjacent to highly profitable market centers. New England, so diversified in its soil and topographic characteristics, will continue to supply a certain part of the lumber demand from the regions unsuited to agriculture; but in the more sterile parts of New England the timber growth is slow and the quality of the product inferior. The Coastal Plain is adapted to trucking, the raising of small fruits, the cultivation of cotton, corn, rice, sugar cane and grasses. It is also accessible to cheap transportation facilities, and becoming each year more accessible to the great market centers of Eastern cities. Economically, therefore, this belt is ruled out from the possibility of remaining a large forested region.

The evidence in favor of a forest reserve in the more rugged part of the southern Appalachians is, indeed, overwhelming, if we consider only its adaptability for forest products; but there are other important economic ends to be subserved by the project. This southern extension of the mountains emerges into the Piedmont Plateau, which abuts on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. The streams which flow from the mountains flow with a regularity not characteristic of any streams in a deforested region. They also possess great water power potentiality in the mountain part of their course, through the broken plain of the old Piedmont, and at the *fall line*, where they drop from the old land area to the new. The import-

ance of conserving the forests of this region for the sake of the maintenance and development of the maximum water power would be of itself sufficient cause to justify an enthusiastic support of the movement. Not only is the water power of the streams of this region sufficient to maintain industries for the manufacture of the raw materials of the region itself, but sufficient to supply power by transmission to a large part of the outlying regions for the manufacture of the raw materials of the coastal plain. It may be of interest to know that South Carolina and North Carolina are developing cotton factories more rapidly than any other part of the United States, and it is the magnificent water power of the Piedmont Plateau and the adjacent Appalachian Mountains, in convenient proximity to the cotton fields, which has turned the tide of factory development from New England to this part of the South.

It would be difficult to estimate the economic benefits resulting from the regulation of flood waters, held back by the slow run-off in the large forest areas of the mountains. It is safe to predict that this element of destruction will be brought under more perfect control by the larger development of water power through the construction of storage dams at favorable points along many of the rivers which have their source in the mountains.

During recent decades the urban population of the eastern United States has increased very rapidly in the North Atlantic States and in the Middle States, and the rural population has increased with as phenomenal rapidity in the Middle States and in certain parts of the Southern States. The urban population of the United States has increased far more rapidly than the rural population, and it seems that this tendency will be accentuated in the future, instead of being retarded. An abnormal increase of the city population carries with it important moral and social problems, which must be dealt with in the spirit of generosity and the common good. The people of the cities of every class find it necessary to seek rest and recreation. It is only natural that the relaxation and recuperation should be most perfectly realized in pleasant situations removed from the stress and strain of the city environment. Under the growing demand for recreation facilities have sprung up pleasure resorts throughout the wooded regions of the Appalachian Mountains, at many points along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, as well as on the shores of thousands of inland lakes. The

test of experience is bringing into popular favor, with those who really need rest, the quiet, cleanliness and beauty of the mountains. At present we have room and to spare of this character, but it must be remembered that, if the population increases as rapidly in the future as it has in the immediate past, that part of the United States east of the Mississippi River will before the middle of this century have a population greater than the present total population of the United States. The cities will grow larger and more numerous, and the regions adapted to agriculture will steadily increase in density of population. So great will be the number needing and seeking recreation that the mountain reservations will afford neither quiet nor privacy, unless large areas be acquired in this generation.

The utility of recreation facilities is determined by the character of the facilities and their accessibility. Though many of the superior facilities of the southern Appalachians for healthful and pleasurable recreation are well known to thousands who have enjoyed them, it is not amiss to call attention to these in connection with any discussion which looks toward a realization of the Southern Appalachian National Park.

The most thrilling and obvious characteristic of this wide expanse of easily accessible mountain region is its varied landscape, which so intermingles the new with the old, the rugged with the gentle, and the wild with the domestic, as to be of surpassing beauty. The mountain slopes are clad with virgin forest growth, which is majestic and varied in species. The narrow, productive valleys thread the landscape as artistic draperies on Nature's verdant mantle of forests and fields. Nowhere does the sun shine brighter, and the forest landscape is perfected by the artistic variation in cloud effect, which now charms with the azure blue high over the living green; and again, in matchless colors of a summer's sunset, blends into one harmonious panorama the gorgeous beauties of earth and sky. The fame of Swiss and Italian mountain scenery has gone into every land, but the conservative traveler who has seen the best of these beautiful lands is forced to acknowledge that they are rivaled by many picturesque scenes in the Appalachians, which have not been immortalized by poet or artist.

Healthfulness is one of the essential requisites for adapting any region to recreative purposes. The region included in the pros-

pective Southern Appalachian Reserve is conspicuously noted for its mild and salubrious climate throughout the year. Western North Carolina is one of the few spots in the United States which is popular both as a summer and winter resort. The health record of Asheville, N. C., held first place on the statistical record until the community became so popular as a resort for individuals afflicted with tubercular infection as to upset the normal health and death records.

People who need rest are also in need of quiet and the opportunity for seclusion, when such is desired. This is giving to our mountain playgrounds and camping grounds a substantial gain in popularity over the more or less congested pleasure centers of our sea and lake shores. The desire for rest and seclusion will, however, not appeal so strongly to the average man and woman unless the region which offers the opportunity also bids fair to supply an adequate amount of varied, nutritious and palatable food. The seaside resorts supply this want to the satisfaction of those who come, but since most of them are in close proximity to large cities and populous regions it is necessary that the food supplies be purchased at maximum city prices. The Appalachian region in question is sufficiently far removed from congested centers and city markets to make prices of food commodities reasonable. The narrow, but fertile, valleys produce an adequate food supply of the varied products indigenous to this latitude, which are scarcely surpassed in quality and variety by any other similar area. The lower foothills and the upper mountain slopes add generously to the table wants by supplying every variety of orchard and small fruits grown in the temperate zone, the reputation of which as to size, beauty and flavor has gone forth to regions far beyond the mountains. But this is not all, for the crystal streams which plow their way madly toward the lowlands give home to fishes of the sporting types, the delight of catching which is only rivaled by the satisfaction of eating. Mountain trout constitute one of the coveted delicacies of the hotels. Fishing will continue one of the most buoyant recreations of the mountain traveler and vacationist, but more and more will the opportunity for its enjoyment be limited to regions under government protection and control.

Hunting appeals to the masculine sense of recreation with a call as strong as the fishing sport, and a large forest reserve of the

character and extent under discussion would afford the opportunity to indulge this natural aptitude under conditions satisfactory to all parties concerned. Thousands of travelers sojourn each year in the woods of Maine and Canada for a few days, or at most a few weeks, of hunting and fishing. Many go far into the interior by canoe or pack to find that rest which can only come from close contact with the wilds of nature.

The superior opportunities for camp life afforded by a large, accessible and well-watered mountain region are worthy of consideration. There are many who prefer a vacation by camping because they love the entire change in habits of living, and find rest in roughing it. There are others who either choose or are forced to become campers, because of the small expense attached thereto. The government would, naturally, place certain restrictions on this privilege, for the protection of those assets reserved for supplying a steady dividend to all sufficiently interested to come and draw.

The number of individuals who select their recreative or vacation resort with reference to opportunities for studying nature, either as specialists or amateurs, is increasing rapidly, and in planning for the future it is not only important but necessary that we make provision to meet satisfactorily the demands of this large class. Under this class will be included all persons who are interested in the study of flowers, trees, rocks, minerals, birds, insects, wild animals, and people. No part of the United States is better adapted by nature for fulfilling this purpose than the Appalachian Mountains. In this connection we should also bear in mind the profitable purpose which will be subserved in this large forest reservation in affording unusual opportunities for promoting the advanced study of forestry and landscape gardening. Mr. Vanderbilt was the first individual to demonstrate a full appreciation of the excellence of the region as a field laboratory in this important division of science and economics.

The recreative activities of Chautauquas and of the annual or periodic meetings of various organizations are being emphasized more and more in the selection of suitable places for the convention or assembly, whatever its character. These represent now a large constituency, and the number will increase rapidly during the coming years. Not only is it important that the place offer the attractions and facilities which will give the attendants the most pleasure

and relaxation, but equally important that it shall be centrally located with reference to the sections to be served. The part of the southern Appalachian region intended for inclusion in the new park reserve fulfills ideally both of these requirements; so much so that for some years Asheville, N. C., has probably attracted as many public assemblies as any point in the United States; and certainly has attracted more than any other rural locality.

The accessibility of the region, both to the population as distributed at present and to the prospective population of the future, deserves more than incidental consideration. If one will take the time to locate the region on a map of the eastern United States, one will find that this most beautiful part of the mountains of the East is easily accessible to the states bordering the Great Lakes, to the Atlantic seaboard as far north as New York, and to all the Southern States. In fact, it is within twelve hours' travel of more than 50 per cent. of the population of the United States. If development takes place along the lines of natural economic returns, the increase in population in the forthcoming decades will be most rapid in the central and southern part of the Mississippi Valley and in the Atlantic coast plain, which regions surround this prospective park reserve on the east, south and west. We have already mentioned the rapid increase in manufactures in the lower Piedmont, which bring with them a corresponding increase in the density of the population and the variety of classes to be served.

Until recent years the growth of cities has been most phenomenal in the North Atlantic and Middle States, but the tide has already shifted, and the most rapid relative increase in urban population is now taking place in the states south of the Mason and Dixon line. This is coming about through the concentration and industrial utilization of native capital, along with that of investors from various parts of the United States and foreign countries. There is no question but that the Southern States have already inaugurated an industrial revival which is destined to revolutionize the region industrially, socially and, probably, politically. All of the forces at work are tending to a consolidation of interests and a generous exchange of good will, which makes it self-evident that the project under consideration will not only be national in its origin and purposes, but in its pleasures and privileges.